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## NOTES AND QUERIES

O-NŌ-DAH.—Men of science will probably learn with interest that among the Canadian Iroquois there exists a strange but firm faith in the medicinal value of an herb they term “o-nō-dah.” Their faith in this herb for good is as great as is their allegiance to the old Iroquois Confederation. It has been explained to me, that, with the scattering of the Confederate nations from their native home in the United States, the plant was dug up with its roots, and carried to different places by the several nations. It was never replanted. Although this took place over one hundred years ago, the supply may last another century. The greatest care is taken to whom small quantities of this herb are intrusted. To keep its medicinal quality “good,” the individual who is given charge of it must be one of good moral character. A chief lately told me that a quantity of it was spoiled by a young man who took to drinking “hard-stuff” and “told lies.”

I have never seen the herb, though I have heard of it from childhood. It is generally thought that Pagans were the only class of Indians foolish enough to place any reliance on its value, but that is a great mistake. I have seen and heard too many death-bed wishes and declarations to believe it. O-nō-dah is not a cure-all, but it will cure more ills than any other herb these Indians have ever known. The conditions under which this medicine is administered to a patient are so mysterious, and it is so jealously guarded, that it makes it both valuable and interesting to the student of Indianology. Its efficacy as a cure is so thoroughly rooted in the hearts of the people, that no skill of medical science, no amount of ridicule from “missionaries,” during the last four centuries, have lessened the Indian’s faith in o-nō-dah. Whatever ceremonial practice there may be, attending the use of this remedy, — and there are many, — it is never directly a public one. The name itself is scarcely ever uttered outside of a sick-chamber. O-nō-dah is only an instance in point, showing the field for a scientific investigator in Canada. But, alas! we Canadians are so patriotic, we hate to leave our mangers, lest the cause of science should become too apparent, and reflect upon our own poverty in the matter.

J. O. BRANT-SERO.

HAMILTON, ONT., CANADA.

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 BOOK REVIEWS

TWO REPRESENTATIVE TRIBES OF QUEENSLAND. By JOHN MATHEW, with an Introduction by A. H. KEANE. London and Leipzig, T. Fisher Unwin, 1910. xxiii + 256 p., 1 map, and 6 illustrations.

This little volume is a monograph by the author of “Eagle-hawk and Crow,” on two tribes (the Kabi and the Wakka) which occupy the coast and part of the interior of Queensland, roughly opposite Fraser Island. The entire first chapter is devoted to the author’s pet subject, the origin of the Australian race. He wades through the literature of the subject, only to arrive at his old conclusion that the Australian is a mixture containing Papuan, Malay, and Dravidian elements (pp. 28–30). Mathew’s treatment of the evidence is largely

dialectic; and, in the expectation of more convincing data, judgment may well be suspended. It must be noted, however, that Berry and Robertson, in a recent "Biometrical Study on the Relative Degree of Purity of Race of the Tasmanian, Australian, and Papuan" (Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, vol. xxxi, part I, no. 2), have arrived at results which support Mathew's general contention. These authors made use of Pearson's biometrical method in a study of measurements of length, breadth, and height of 86 Tasmanian, 100 Australian, and 191 Papuan crania. The calculations seem to show that the Tasmanian comes first in purity, followed by the Australian and the Papuan (*op. cit.*, p. 27).

As in his former work, Mathew proceeds to apply his theory of the origin of Australians to an interpretation of the two-phratry system of Australian tribes. The phratries, he maintains, correspond to two distinct races. In support of his contention, the author mentions actual physical differences observed between individuals belonging to opposite phratries; the native belief in the existence of such differences; conflict myths (see the story of "The Spiteful Crow," etc., given on pp. 190-196); phratry names expressing contrast of color (Eagle-hawk and Crow, Black Cockatoo and White Cockatoo, etc., pp. 30-36).

It is, of course, obvious that any such origin of the Australian phratries is quite beyond the range of the probable. Moreover, if any physical differences between the individuals of the two phratries had at any time existed, they must have long since become obliterated, owing to the fact that the phratries are exogamous with reference to each other (*cf.* Wallis, "Australian Marriage Classes," in *Man*, March, 1911).

Passing over the sections dealing with the geographical location, physical and mental traits, and material culture of the Kabi and Wakka, we may now turn to Chapter VIII, which deals with social organization, and proves to be of great interest (pp. 128-152). In several of his earlier publications, Mathew had claimed that the Kabi, Wakka, and neighboring tribes counted descent through the mothers. Howitt ("Native Tribes," etc., pp. 116 et seq.) disregards this evidence; and Thomas, following Howitt, represents the area on his map ("Kinship and Marriage in Australia," p. 40) as paternal. Now Mathew once more returns to the subject, and proves, to my mind conclusively, the prevalence of maternal descent among the Kabi, Wakka, Gurang, and a number of neighboring tribes which have the same classes as the Wakka. The phratries and classes among the Kabi may be represented as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{Dilbai} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Dh rwain (I)} \\ \text{B nda (II)} \end{array} \right. & \text{K paitthin} \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Barang (III)} \\ \text{Balkuin (IV)} \end{array} \right. \end{array}$$

This arrangement differs from that given by Howitt, who pairs II with IV, and I with III. That Mathew is right, becomes clear when we note the marriage regulations. The phratries are exogamous. II (*m*) marries III (*f*). If, however, no females of class III are available, II (*m*) may also marry IV (*f*); and so on with the other classes. From this it follows, of course, that I and II constitute one phratry, III and IV constituting the other. Now, if II (*m*) marries III (*f*), the children are IV; if II (*m*) marries IV (*f*), the children are III. In other words, the children belong to the mother's phratry, and to the class which, together with the mother's class, constitutes her phratry. All nature, moreover, or at least a large part of it, is apportioned between the two phratries

as constituted respectively by the classes I/II and III/IV (p. 144). The totem, of course, also follows the mother, which fact, in the light of Mathew's data, ceases to be an anomaly (*cf.* Howitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 229-230).

As a result of Mathew's careful inquiry, the Kabi, Wakka, and neighboring tribes no longer constitute an exception, but fall in line with the other tribes of the vast area with four classes and female descent. If that is so, the following accounts should be revised: Howitt (*op. cit.*, pp. 116-117 and 129); Thomas (*op. cit.*, map on p. 40, and *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1905, map on p. 762); Goldenweiser (*Journal of American Folk-Lore*, 1910, p. 185); Frazer (*Totemism and Exogamy*, I, pp. 443-449).

The author also tells us that among the Kabi and Wakka "a man was not debarred from killing and eating his totem, but in practice he protected it and regarded it as belonging to his own people" (p. 145). The family, kinship and marriage, are treated in Chapter IX; myths and legends, parts of which are recorded in text, in Chapter X. A short discussion of the Kabi and Wakka languages, and a brief comparative vocabulary, complete the volume.

A. A. GOLDENWEISER.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,  
NEW YORK.

THE EVOLUTION OF LITERATURE. By A. S. MACKENZIE. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1911.

It is an indication of the increasing appreciation of the importance of anthropological studies that a student of English and comparative literatures should attempt to attack his problems from the standpoint of the student of the art of primitive man. The problem is an important and promising one, but we fear that the author's use of anthropological data will not yield the desired results.

The comparative anthropological method is beset with dangers. Much of the current material is so plastic, that it may be moulded so as to fit any form, and the trenchant criticism of which philologists are past masters has not yet given to anthropological data that rigidity which is required for the framework of a well-built theory. The author accepts all that writers, good, bad, and indifferent, offer him, groups it in accordance with a bold classification of human civilization, — primitive, barbaric, autocratic, democratic, — and thus gives a deductive interpretation to all his data, which will be rejected by all who reject his fundamental classification. His implicit reliance upon the comparative method will be doubted by those who believe in the necessity of a more careful study of the influences of historical connection. The material that the author uses is hardly such as can be used for establishing far-reaching theories. What would the author say of a student who tries to generalize on English literature, without any specific proofs of his facts derived from that literature itself; and here — to take the example of American "primitive" literature — we are expected to form a judgment on the basis of the forms of oral art as shown by the Fuegians, Botocudo, and Seri, about which the best authorities on these tribes know next to nothing, and by the Eskimo, whose oral art the author certainly does not know. The few authentic specimens of Eskimo literary art (Thalbitzer, Kaladlit Okalluktuaillait, Barnum) are not mentioned at all; and the characteristics as given are based essentially on Alaskan material, which is least characteristic of the Eskimo, but highly modified by the coast Indians of Alaska. The standard of philological criticism applied is throughout so inadequate, that